

I have concluded that this is a rational amendment. It is hard for me to see how it can be opposed. Therefore, I will support it. I thank the Senator for offering it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I yield 7 minutes to the Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I used to serve on the Amtrak board of directors. We have a lot of trains running up and down the Northeast corridor. I have ridden on them since I was a little boy. The trains run about every hour. You can catch a train in Boston to come to DC pretty much every hour; between New York and DC, the frequency is even more. They run from 5 in the morning and go well into the night.

The reason a lot of people don't ride trains across the country is there are 15 different long-distance trains, which only run 2 or 3 days in a lot of cases. It may come in at 1, 2 or 3 a.m. in the morning, and it is not very convenient. It is hard to build ridership. I agree with Senator SUNUNU. I am not interested in spending \$200 or \$150 per passenger to subsidize long-distance trains. We don't do it in the Northeast corridor.

We have addressed this in a more thoughtful way, and I want to share that. I commend Senator LAUTENBERG and Senator LOTT and our staffs for working on it for years. The legislation calls for the Federal Railroad Administration to actually study every year, for the next 3 years, five long-distance train routes to figure out why they lose money and what can we do to reduce the cost of the train routes. I think they will find this in places in the Midwest. These numbers are out of the Midwest. There is a lot of investment, particularly in the Illinois area. Ridership is up on the Chicago-St. Louis corridor in the last year. Ridership between Chicago and Carbondale is up 46 percent. For the Chicago-Galesburg-Quincy route, ridership has increased 33 percent. They have actually added frequency and provided better service and more on-time service, and they have worked with the freight railroads that control the tracks to get better support so that they let the passenger trains run on time.

I think there is a better way to skin this cat than our friend, Senator SUNUNU, has proposed. I believe the answer is in the legislation. If you look at the country as a whole, today we have probably over 50 percent of the population living within 50 miles of one of our coasts. Think about that. What that means is we have these densely populated corridors up and down the east coast, the gulf coast, and on the west coast. They are perfectly suited for high-passenger corridor rail service.

Think about the other places around the country, and there is an example of the St. Louis-to-Chicago route. That part of America is where densely populated corridors also exist. My suspicion

is if we provide them the kind of service we are providing on these coastal corridors, we would see the increase in ridership that we are seeing in Illinois and also in Missouri.

Again, to my friends who want to make sure we take some affirmative action to provide better train service but reduce the kind of subsidies now being paid for folks riding trains that run every 2 or 3 days, coming through communities at all hours of the night, as well as the day, there is a smarter way to do this, and it is in the legislation.

I encourage my colleagues to oppose this particular amendment, however well intended it is. I think there is a better way to get to the legitimate issue raised. It is the language Senators LOTT and LAUTENBERG and our staffs and I have crafted and included. The first year, we would take five long-distance train routes and scrub their performance and find out a smarter way to provide the service. The second year, we would do five more, and the third year, five more. So over 3 years we would scrub 15 of these.

A lot of people are starting to ride trains who would not have thought about it before. That is because of congestion on the roads and highways, in airports, bad pollution in the air, and our dependence on foreign oil. The passenger rail service can address all those issues. Amtrak is not the whole answer, but it begins to get at the answer.

The language in the underlying bill answers the question Senator SUNUNU raises. I urge a "no" vote on the amendment and support for the underlying legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, we understand that Senator SUNUNU comes with a background in business and comprehension of what balance sheets and financial statements are like. We recognize that the State of New Hampshire does have some Amtrak service. But the State of New Hampshire is also one of the beneficiaries of something called Essential Air Service, where the country takes great pains to make certain that communities are not so isolated that you have difficulty in traveling from there and to there. It costs the Federal Government about \$50 million a year for Essential Air Service. We are all in the same boat. It is our country, these are our communities, and they have to be part of the functioning of our society.

So when I look at the amendment proposed by the Senator from New Hampshire, this amendment would destroy our national passenger rail system. Based on 2007 data, the Sununu amendment would immediately cut passenger rail service to the entire Southwestern United States. Four of Amtrak's longest train routes would be gone. It is easy to see on this chart the lines that crisscross our country. You are saying that almost everything, in

about a 5-year period, would be pretty much not in existence. We start off with four of Amtrak's longest train routes, most of them in the Southwest. Next year, five more trains would be eliminated, including the Silver Star, which is New York to Miami; Silver Meteor; the Cardinal; the Coast Starlight, Seattle, WA, to L.A., CA; and the Lakeshore Limited, Chicago to New York. These comprise something over a million travelers a year. Within 5 years—likely sooner—the entire national network of long-distance trains would be gone because corporate overhead costs would be shared among the remaining routes, increasing their costs.

These long-distance trains provide essential transportation services to millions of Americans, and their ridership and revenue has been growing.

Last year, ridership increased on Amtrak's long-distance trains 2.5 percent and revenue went up 5 percent. For instance, if we look at Amtrak's Palmetto train, which is New York to Miami, its route extends south from the Northeast corridor and serves South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia. It had 7.5 percent more riders than the year before, a total of 157,000 riders.

The States want Amtrak service, and they want to expand it as well.

One Governor—I have a letter written in 1996—wrote to Amtrak claiming:

Many of us believe that Amtrak finances and operations are a matter for the Federal Government. The Federal Government created Amtrak.

This is the letter from the then-Governor of Texas, George W. Bush, in 1996. He attributes responsibility to the Federal Government.

To connect our rural areas with our urban commercial centers, the Federal Government subsidizes all modes of transportation. We have essential air service, which I mentioned. We have Federal subsidies for intercity bus transportation. And since the Federal Government took over passenger rail service, we have funded it as well.

I wish to make note of the fact that despite the fact that our airlines are for-profit companies, we insist that we have to help them function and we give them about \$3 billion a year in subsidies. These are for-profit companies. We want them to keep flying. There has been about \$20 billion put into the aviation system since 9/11.

I remind our colleagues, there is no passenger rail service in the world that earns a profit. Countries pay for rail service because of the benefits, and if you eliminate these trains, it would mean millions of additional cars on the highways and even longer lines at the airport, adding to our country's congestion problems.

In addition, terminating these routes destroys Amtrak's interconnected system, isolating different parts of the country from one another and reducing the utility and the value of all of Amtrak's services.